

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 5296

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG, ASEAN, VN, CB, LA

SUBJECT: ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS ON INDOCHINA

REF: (A) KUALA LUMPUR 5753 (NOTAL); (B) KUALA LUMPUR 5078 (NOTAL)

(C) BANGKOK 17425 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' PRESS CONFERENCE
HIGHLIGHTS VARIED PERCEPTIONS OF THE "INDOCHINA PROBLEM"
AMONG THE FIVE ASEAN MEMBERS BUT THEIR UNDERLYING CONSENSUS
IN FAVOR OF CONTINUED CONCILIATORY POSTURE IN FACE OF HARSH
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CRITICISM OF THE ORGANIZATION FROM SRV AND LAOS. ACCORDING
TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, EVEN THAI FOREIGN MINISTER UPADIT GAMELY
ECHOED IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED EFFORTS TO SEEK FRIENDLY
TIES WITH INDOCHINESE REGIMES, DESPITE FRANKER REMARKS
BY PRIME MINISTER THANIN IN OTHER FORA TAKING CAMBODIANS
TO TASK FOR THEIR "UNREASONABLY AND UNNATURALLY AGGRESSIVE"
BEHAVIOR (REF C). END SUMMARY.

2. IN A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE AUG. 5 THE FIVE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS ON A VARIETY OF TOPICS, BUT PRESS PLAY FOCUSED ON THEIR REMARKS ON RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST REGIMES IN INDOCHINA. PHILIPPINE FOREIGN MINISTER ROMULO REPORTEDLY STRESSED THE NEED FOR ASEAN COUNTRIES TO BE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SRV, WHICH STILL SUFFERS FROM THE TRAUMAS OF 30 YEARS OF WAR. ASEAN MUST CONTINUE TO GO OUT OF ITS WAY TO CONVINCE VIETNAM OF ITS SINCERITY IN WANTING FRIENDLY TIES IN THE INTEREST OF REGIONAL PEACE. IN THIS REGARD, HE NOTED THAT THE GOP HAS INVITED SRV PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG TO VISIT THE PHILIPPINES AND HAS SENT SEEDLINGS AND OFFERED TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL AID FOR THE SRV'S RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS.

3. MALAYSIA'S RITHAUDDEEN CALLED FOR "PATIENCE," EXPRESSING MALAYSIA'S HOPE THAT THROUGH STRENGTHENED BILATERAL RELATIONS AND "MORE DIALOGUES" MALAYSIA AND THE OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE VIETNAM UNDERSTAND THE ORGANIZATION'S COMMITMENT TO A ZONE OF PEACE, NEUTRALITY AND FREEDOM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. "IT IS THE DUTY OF ALL OF US TO SEE THAT UNDERSTANDING AND NEIGHBORLINESS EXIST BILATERALLY WITH ALL COUNTRIES IN THE REGION," HE ADDED.

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4. ON THE OTHER HAND, SINGAPORE FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM REPORTEDLY TOOK A MORE CRITICAL STANCE, REMARKING THAT ASEAN IS AWARE OF THE "DIVIDE AND RULE" TACTICS THE SRV IS EMPLOYING IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH VARIOUS ASEAN MEMBERS, WHEREBY IT MAKES DISTINCTIONS IN ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THOSE ASEAN COUNTRIES WITH WHICH IT IS ON GOOD TERMS AND THOSE OTHERS WITH WHICH ITS RELATIONS ARE "NOT SO GOOD." HE CAUTIONED MEMBER STATES TO BE AWARE OF "THIS REALITY" AND "NOT ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE DIVIDED." ASEAN FACES A DILEMMA, RAJARATNAM NOTED: "THE ASSOCIATION'S HAND OF FRIENDSHIP TO VIETNAM IS UNQUALIFIED. THERE ARE NO CONDITIONS. SOMETIMES THEY MAY RECIPROCATE WITH QUALIFICATIONS. WE ACCEPT IT, BUT WE TAKE NOTE OF BOTH THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THIS," AND MUST TEMPER OUR OPTIMISM ACCORDINGLY, HE INDICATED. LATER, IN RESPONSE TO ANOTHER QUESTION, RAJARATNAM SAID THAT A GUIDING FACTOR WAS THAT EACH NATION'S FOREIGN POLICY NOT IN ANY WAY THREATEN THE INTEGRITY OR SECURITY OR TEND TO ISOLATE A FELLOW ASEAN STATE."

5. THAI FOREIGN MINISTER UPADIT'S REMARKS WERE NOT

EXTENSIVELY QUOTED BY LOCAL PRESS. HOWEVER, HE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THAILAND WOULD CONTINUE TO SEEK FRIENDLY TIES WITH VIETNAM AND OTHER INDOCHINESE STATES BECAUSE IT BELIEVED THAT DESPITE DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS, COOPERATION WAS POSSIBLE. (INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MALIK WAS NOT QUOTED ON THIS SUBJECT.)

6. COMMENT: PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS, LIKE THEIR PREVIOUS TELEVISION INTERVIEW (SEE REF B ON ASEAN'S "POLITICAL WILL"), HIGHLIGHTED THEIR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS' DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS OF THE "INDOCHINA PROBLEM." ALTHOUGH THAI PRIME MINISTER THANIN SPOKE IN BLUNTER TERMS IN SEPARATE FORA ON CAMBODIAN BELLIGERENCE TOWARD HIS COUNTRY (REF C), HERE
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UPADIT REPORTEDLY ECHOED CONCILIATORY THEMES ENUNCIATED BY HIS MALAYSIAN AND PHILIPPINE COUNTERPARTS, AND IT WAS THIS THEME THAT APPEARED IN PARAS 5-7 OF THE SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE (REF A) RATHER THAN RAJARATNAM'S MORE WARY APPROACH. HOWEVER, A THAI EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER TOLD EMBOFF AUG. 10 THAT RTG FELT VERY FRUSTRATED BY HAVING ITS ATTEMPTS TO SEEK FRIENDLY TIES WITH INDOCHINESE REGIMES "IGNORED." TOUCHING ON THE "DIVIDE AND RULE" TACTIC MENTIONED BY RAJARATNAM, THE THAI OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE RTG HOPED THAT MALAYSIA WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS RELATIVELY BETTER STANDING WITH THESE REGIMES TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE RTG'S CONCILIATORY GESTURE (UNSPECIFIED). HE INDICATED THAT THE RTG IN FACT HAD REQUESTED THE GOM TO USE ITS "GOOD OFFICES" IN THIS REGARD. MILLER

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